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ABSTRACT

Hispanics are a diverse group with considerable differences in country of origin, social class, race, educational status, and level of assimilation. Nonetheless, what does characterize all the major groups except the Cubans, albeit in varying intensities, are high levels of poverty and low levels of educational achievement. Cultural differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics often put Hispanic children at a disadvantage when they enter school. Some guiding principles for educational reform efforts to increase Hispanic student learning are: (1) creating a comprehensive sense of student responsibility for the well-being of the school; (2) demonstrating care and concern for every member of the school community; (3) expecting academic excellence; (4) grouping heterogeneously (and eliminating tracking); (5) requiring involved, active learning; (6) strengthening the counseling function; (7) involving and educating parents; (8) connecting school and work; (9) immersing students in family and life planning; and (10) providing opportunities for advancement upon high school graduation. Despite the controversy surrounding bilingual education, the issue of how to teach English to language minorities must also be addressed. This paper contains "thumbnail histories" of the major Hispanic groups in the United States. (Contains 28 references.) (KS)

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ED 362 342

LOOK ME IN THE EYE

A Hispanic Cultural Perspective on School Reform

Rafael Valdivieso and Siobhan Nicolau

"...the parents never come to school and they don't teach respect in the home Why, the children won't even look me in the eye when I talk to them."

Texas Teacher

"...respect is the most important thing is what I tell my kids. Don't make trouble, don't ask questions, and look down when the teacher talks to you."

Latino Parent

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INTRODUCTION

Being undereducated is undoubtedly the single biggest obstacle to the overall social and economic assimilation of Hispanics in the United States. Hispanic educational attainment is the indicator that most dramatically illustrates the lack of parity between Hispanic and Anglo populations.

In 1990 only 9 percent of Hispanics aged 25-or older had completed four or more years of college, compared to 21 percent of non-Hispanics. Only half of Hispanics in the same age group had completed high school, compared to over three-quarters of non-Hispanics.

While the low education attainment figures of Hispanic youth reflect in part the large-scale immigration of Hispanics, many of whom arrive as young adults with little education, they also attest to the problems of Hispanics who are educated in U.S. schools. Forty percent of Hispanic high school students

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drop out and another 25 percent graduate without the skills required to secure employment in a stable sector of the economy. This means that 65 percent of Hispanics in the 25 to 34 age group who have been enrolled in the U.S school systems are meeting adult responsibilities with inadequate educations. While there is no perfect way to relate grade and skills levels of U.S. schools to those of other nations, it is safe to assume that the lack of preparation of Hispanic/Latino immigrants who have **never** attended U.S. schools, equals or exceeds that of Hispanics who have attended U.S. schools. They too, then, are likely to experience difficulty finding stable employment. For the many this translates into a likelihood of life-long poverty.

Research has revealed that the parental level of education—regardless of whether the parents are native-born or immigrant—is the most powerful predictor of how well a child will do in school. That being so, the prognosis is clear and dismal. The children of 65 percent of this nation's Hispanics aged 25 to 34—immigrant and native born— are likely to be trapped in the cycle of poverty *unless they are enrolled in effective schools that are sensitive to their culture and traditions, recognize their needs, and reach out to work with their families.*

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Aspects of Hispanic Heterogeneity and Homogeneity

WHO IS LATINO/HISPANIC?

Individuals do not readily self-identify as "Hispanic" or "Latino". The vast majority generally think of themselves in relation to the country from which they or their ancestors came. In a television interview Bill Moyers asked Ernie Cortez, a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award winner and community organizer, what it was like to be a Hispanic in the United States. Cortez answered to the effect that he wasn't sure what it was like to be a Hispanic because, although he had been a Mexican-American all his life, he had been a Hispanic only a few years. Arturo Villar, former publisher of Vista Magazine, points out that he had to immigrate from Cuba to become a Hispanic. They only exist here in the United States.

In fact, the term "Hispanic" was created by the Federal bureaucracy as a means of labeling a category that included several groups. "Latino" derives from Latin America, a term devised to distinguish Spanish and Portuguese colonized American lands from those American lands colonized by Northern Europeans. The first widespread use of "Latin", apart from the geographical designation, denoted certain kinds of music, as in the phrase "a Latin beat." Only recently has "Latino" been proposed as an alternative to "Hispanic," largely by proponents of Hispanic unity movements.

Latino/Hispanic leaders have discussed the benefits of unity for decades. However, strong Latino/Hispanic coalitions designed to broaden the base of support for or against policies and practices that affect the diverse Latino/Hispanic communities, took shape over the course of the last twenty years. The selection of an "umbrella" word acceptable to all members of these unity coalitions has often strained the cause of "unity". "Latino" is the term of choice in California; in the East, Midwest and Texas there is still a preference on the part of many for "Hispanic". Some unity spokespersons have avoided the Hispanic/Latino debate by using "La Raza," a word that up until now meant peoples of Mexican heritage.

Those who favor "Latino" feel that the term "Hispanic" places too much emphasis on the "Spanish" component of the cultures and does not respect or reflect the Indian and African-American cultural roots of the population. Those who lean toward "Hispanic" feel that separating the political terminology and the bureaucratic/demographic/statistical terminology, only serves to confuse further a situation that is already socially, culturally and historically complex.

It is important to note that all the hyphenated terms—group specific and pan-Hispanic—confer minority status on the individuals who bear them. This is a reality of a pluralistic society that is not always easily accepted or understood by those who bear the labels, or by those who confer them.

But labels aside, what are Hispanics? Western Hemisphere Hispanics are a cultural blend resulting from the expansion of the Spanish empire in the 15th

and 16th centuries. Their diverse origins include: New World civilizations from Aztecs and Incas to Apaches and Zapotecs; African slaves; Spanish explorers, governors, soldiers and servants—and their women—and the English and French who competed with the Spanish for a piece of the New World.

U.S. Hispanics are united by a common Spanish language and a heritage that contains aspects of both Indian, African and Spanish cultural and religious values.

But U.S. Hispanics are divided by geography, country of origin, race, class, traditional group differences and the time and circumstances of their entry into the U.S.

HOW MANY HISPANIC/LATINOS ARE THERE?

White, Black, Brown and Red—both native-born and immigrant—"Hispanics/Latinos" are the fastest growing U.S. minority according to the U.S. Census. Their numbers—22.4 million in 1991—are expected to double in 30 years and triple in 60. The Hispanic birthrate is higher than that of the general population, and it is estimated that immigration will continue at the present rate of 250,000 per year. As a consequence of this natural increase and immigration, it is estimated that within 20 years Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority.

WHERE ARE THE HISPANICS?

Hispanics are the most urbanized population in the U.S. and they are highly concentrated. About 76 percent live in five states, California (33 percent), Texas (21 percent, New York (11 percent), Florida (6 percent), and Illinois (5 percent). About 65 percent reside in only 13 key markets: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, San Diego, Dallas, McAllen, Phoenix, and Denver *where their children —immigrant and native-born—are becoming the predominant number or majority of the school-age population.*

"IMMIGRANT" VERSUS "NATIVE-BORN"

Americans by Fiat

For most Hispanics entry into the United States has been voluntary and has implied an acceptance of the unspoken obligation of the immigrant and the immigrant's descendants to adapt—not assimilate, *adapt*—to their host country. However, it is estimated that nearly a quarter of our native-born Hispanic U.S. citizens owe their presence to the U.S. policy of "Manifest Destiny", a U.S. policy of conquest. Both the Southwest and Puerto Rico were settled by the Spanish in the late 1500s—before the pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. These territories were ceded to the United States in peace treaties more than three hundred years later, and the individuals living in them—native language, culture and all—became involuntary inhabitants of the United States, as did Native Americans, African-American slaves, and the inhabitants of the Virgin Islands, Hawaii, Guam and Samoa. This fact has implications for how the country deals with questions of the language and culture of these individuals and their descendants. In the Hispanic arena it especially affects Puerto Ricans, U.S. citizens, 3.5 million of whom continue to live on an Island whose first and official language is Spanish.

Immigrants

The United States is a young nation all of whose population, with the exception of the Native-Americans, came from somewhere else. Central to our national mythology is a celebration of "the melting pot" in which it is claimed that we all did—or we all should—blend into farina with no lumps. Another aspect of the mythology is the dearly held notion that we are oblivious to class distinctions. In fact, immigrants have selectively blended into the melting pot, and it is class— closely tied to education level and race—that preserves the lumps in the farina.

The United States formally admits, 700,000 newcomers a year. The addition of those who arrive informally probably raises the total to one million. Historically that is not unprecedented. According to Gary Rubin in a recent

report of the American Jewish Committee, flows roughly equaled that level six times between 1905 and 1914. However, at that time the U.S. population only totaled 100 million compared to the present 250 million, so in some respects the impact then was even greater. At the turn of the century, the foreign-born constituted 12-14 percent of the nation's population. Today they make up 6 to 7 percent.

But there are some differences. At the turn of the 19th century the U.S. economy was creating its infrastructure and identity. Today's immigrants, near the turn of the 20th century, must find a place in an established system that is becoming ever more technologically sophisticated. The internal U.S. frontiers are gone.

Secondly, the current immigrant population is highly diverse. Immigration at the turn of the 19th century was almost entirely European and white. By contrast just over a tenth of the new arrivals have European roots. Forty percent now come from Asia and forty percent from Latin-America. And greater diversity is reflected within the categories. For example, a decade ago Hispanic immigration could have been summed up as being largely Mexican and Cuban. Today, though Mexico continues to be dominant, significant flows come from the Dominican Republic, the Central American Republics, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

Thirdly, most European immigrants—before the advent of affordable air travel—came to the new world to stay. Advances in travel and the proximity of the Latin-American countries, offer the possibility of more temporary and cyclical immigration. Though the motivations of Latin immigrants are as diverse as the countries that send them, the majority who enter the United States are low skilled individuals who hope to improve their futures and those of their children. Some come to stay. Others come to work, send back money to their families, and dream of returning to their native lands. Still others are cyclical workers who cross the border seasonally to fill jobs.

Present Hispanic immigration of 250,000 annually is expected to hold into the foreseeable future. The 1990 Census figures on nativity are not yet available,

and the 1980 data has some limitation. However, it is estimated that in 1980 a third of Hispanics residing in the United States were born in other countries.

Most immigrants face very specific challenges. They have to learn the English language. (Periodically we hear that Hispanics are not learning English. Yet, studies have shown that Hispanic immigrants are learning English at the same rate that other immigrants of their socio-economic status have done in the past and are now doing.) If immigrants are adults they have to learn English *while* they seek jobs and work. They have to learn the "American ways," and they have to learn their social and legal obligations.

Most Hispanic immigrants, like most other groups, settle in specific targeted locations where there are others of their background. This gives them a base of support while they learn how to cope with the new culture. For example, in 1987 sixty percent of the Dominicans settled in New York; over a fifth of the Mexicans took up residence in Los Angeles. The consequence of concentration is that the impact of immigration is not strongly felt on the national level. It is recognized and strongly felt on the local level by residents, workers in particular industries, and by certain serving institutions—*most especially the public schools that are expected to transition the children from Spanish to English, integrate the new students into regular classes, give them the skills they need to succeed in the U.S., and often provide English classes for their parents and other adults as well.*

Refugees

International and U.S. law designate as a refugee anyone outside his or her own country having "a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion." Though that is very straightforward, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees published a 90 page book explaining how to apply this definition.

The United States has taken in well over a million refugees since the mid-1970s, far more than any other nation. Still all nations, including the United States, practice selective policies on refugee admission, and until recently that

translated into the U.S. giving preference to those escaping communism. Though some Central American refugees have been admitted in recent years, by far the the largest group of Hispanic refugees have been Cubans fleeing Castro's Cuba.

Refugees or exiles tend to have different mindsets than most immigrants. A primary focus of a large proportion of refugees is how and when they can return home even when that does not seem to be a practical option in the near term. Often they are actively involved in international activities designed to change regimes and make that possible. Like immigrants, they settle in designated areas. However, they tend more than immigrants to dedicate themselves to assuring that their children maintain the home culture and the language, because they believe that they must be ready for "the return." On the other hand, their children, educated here, tend to identify with "here," not the "there" they never knew. Most are culturally strong, but they do not relate the culture to the homeland in the way their parents do. They lack memory. Most are committed to being Americans, albeit ones with a distinct cultural orientation.

The Native-Born

As we stated earlier, there are native-born Hispanics whose families have been here since the *Encuentro*. Some of these, along with the children of 3rd and 4th, 5th, 6th generation Hispanics, are thoroughly blended into the farina. Little remains of their "Hispanidad" beyond the surnames, and sometimes even these are changed or the pronunciation has been anglicized. But others, by choice or by the isolation that geography and poverty can impose, maintain aspects of cultural identification and practice.

Those born in the United States to immigrant families fall into two general categories. Some are raised in families who believe that it is important to forget the old ways and overt efforts are made to blend. These are the parents who speak English at home, however imperfectly. Still other immigrant families let the changes occur naturally, picking and choosing from the two cultures that which suits them best. And some, like the children of refugees,

may maintain and nourish a transplanted culture without any deep intellectual recognition of what they are doing.

The three factors that most affect the native-born Hispanics and those who immigrate to the United States as children, are these:

- The popular youth culture,
- Income level,
- School.

The first, **the pervasive U.S. youth culture,** supported and promoted by television, tends to push all youth into a tribal conformity that does not seem to draw upon the strengths or traditional values of any of the melting pot cultures.

The second, **poverty,** tends to narrow options and it can trap individuals in physical and mental stasis; it can affect family formation and it can limit the amount of time adults can spend with children.

The third, **School,** is the factor that has the potential to balance the negative influences of the other two. Education can open doors and increase options for both families and their children, *when and if schools are given resources and are helped to be sensitive to the cultures and needs of the families they are serving.*

Schools, however, can not fulfill their potential unless they are armed with information that exposes stereotypes and unlocks their understanding. In part that requires thinking about the differences which are outlined above. In part it means becoming familiar with the diverse histories and the collective experiences of the Hispanic groups which are outlined below.

THUMBNAIL HISTORIES

Mexican-Americans

In 1990 the Census indicated that 14 million Mexican/Mexican-Americans lived in the United States. They represented 63 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population, half of whom were concentrated in two states, California and Texas. The median age of the group was 24.3; the median family income was $ 19,968, considerably below the white median family income of $ 35,975.

Apart from the catchall groups, "Central and South Americans" and "Others", Mexican-Americans are the Hispanics/Latinos most difficult to categorize, due to the size of the population and its long and diverse history of settlement and immigration. It ranges from recent arrivals to descendants of families who lived in what is now the United States in the late 1500s. Contrary to the popular impression, the category of U.S. Hispanics of Mexican ancestry includes the highest percentage of individuals who are native-born and were raised right here in the United States.

The first Spanish settlements were concentrated in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, at the end of the Spanish Crown's Santa Fe Trail. In the 1820s when Spain's colonies broke away and established new nations, Mexico encompassed much of what is now Southwestern United States, and Mexicans were a mixture—cultural and physical—of Spanish and Native-American peoples. When half of Mexico's territory was annexed by the United States in the 1840s, the rights of the Spanish residents in the new U.S. territories were guaranteed by treaty. But those rights were unprotected and the majority of the original families in New Mexico and Colorado lost their holding. Most isolated themselves in small villages, maintained Spanish culture and language, and survived for over a century as a poor, rural majority. Until the middle of the 19th century they were relatively cut off from Anglo society and from other Hispanics as well.

Although the Spanish established the famous missions in California in the 17th Century, the founders were few in number and many were members of Catholic religious orders. The bulk of the Mexican immigration to California,

Arizona and Texas occurred after 1847, in waves of low-skilled, predominantly Indian heritage Mexicans, fleeing poverty and political oppression. These immigrants became the underclass of the Southwest, the often exploited labor force for agriculture, industry, and service. They were subject of severe discrimination, including Jim Crow Laws and political disenfranchisement which caused them to withdrew into their barrios.

Despite overt prejudice and the discriminatory practices described above , prior to World War II Mexicans were unofficially allowed—and often encouraged—to enter the U.S. to fill labor needs. But policy fluctuated with the rises and falls of the U.S. economy. For example, in the 1930s when jobs were scarce, Mexicans were declared illegals and deported in great numbers, citizens and non-citizens alike. In response Mexicans and Mexican Americans adopted survival skills—most endeavored to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Major change occurred after World War II. Many Mexican Americans served the U.S. well on the battle fields and home fronts. When the war was over, they took advantage of both the skills they had learned in service and in the factories, and the benefits of the G.I. Bill. They began to improve their lives economically, socially and politically. Regional, national and local organizations seeking equality, justice and protection began to emerge. And Mexicans moved from rural areas to the cities. By 1980 the Census showed that the majority of Mexican Americans were urban residents and many were migrating to the industrial cities of the Midwest. A solid middleclass began to take root. At the same time, the "push/pull" factors maintained immigration from Mexico at high levels. When the U.S. economy was expanding, this immigration was welcome. Mexicans filled jobs U.S. citizens did not want. In periods of economic decline, Mexican immigration was blamed for hard times and Mexicans were accused of taking jobs from deserving U.S. citizens. But in good and bad times the flows of youthful migrants continued, the numbers swelled, and by 1990 urban schools in the states of high concentration—California, Texas, and Arizona saw their Hispanic student enrollments burgeoning.

Puerto Ricans

In 1991 there were 3.5 million Puerto Ricans residing on the Island. The 2,651 815 living in the continental United States represented 11 percent of the continental Hispanic population. Puerto Ricans are young; the median age is 26.7

New York City has been the center of Puerto Rican settlement since the early 1900s, and mainland Puerto Ricans are the most metropolitan of all Hispanic groups. According to the most recent Census, 40 percent of the Puerto Rican continental population resides in New York. The bordering states of New Jersey accounts for another 12 percent. Additional settlements are found in Florida, Illinois, and California. In 1980 average family income on the Island of Puerto Rico was $ 14,858. In 1991 median Puerto Rican household income for those living on the mainland was $ 16,169.

As the dollar figures quoted above indicate, regardless of where Puerto Ricans reside, an alarming proportion of the population is poor. Puerto Rican disadvantage is rooted in both nature's distribution of resources and the policies and practices of the two nations that have claimed Puerto Rico—Spain and the United States.

Spain quickly exhausted Puerto Rico's meager gold mines and shifted its attentions to the wealth of Peru and Mexico. Thereafter, Puerto Rico languished as a relatively ignored military outpost that protected the Spanish shipping lanes. The indigenous Indian population was all but obliterated by disease, conflict and overwork, and African slaves were introduced by the Spanish, first to work the mines and later the sugar industry. The Island was a passive victim in wars between the great colonial powers, and in 1898—following the Spanish-American War—both Puerto Rico and Cuba were annexed by the United States.

Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917, and some improvements in health care and education resulted from the U.S. connection, but dramatic changes did not take place until the initiation of Operation Bootstrap, a joint

Puerto Rican/U.S. development strategy based on outside investment, technology transfers, and tax incentives.

During the '40s, '50s, and '60s Operation Bootstrap went a long way toward modernizing Puerto Rico. Industries were established, the amount of housing and the number of schools and health care facilities were increased; the service sector was expanded; jobs were created, incomes rose, and Puerto Rico became a showcase.

In the 1970s Operation Bootstrap found itself in grave trouble. In part this was a consequence of a recession on the mainland which adversely affected tourism and industrial growth. In part it reflected flaws in the Bootstrap design that had not foreseen that factories would flee to Haiti and Taiwan when the Bootstrap tax incentives expired. Unemployment increased, the island's debt soared, and transfer payments from the United States rose by more than 750 percent within a decade.

Even when Bootstrap was booming, however, Puerto Rico could not support its growing population, and, despite official denials, it was generally recognized that the health of the economy required the out-migration of 50,000 persons each year. Emigration to the mainland—principally New York—began at a relatively slow pace in the early 1900s and increased dramatically after World War II, peaking at 74,000 in 1953. The flows decrease and decline in direct relation to the economies of the the Island and the mainland. And a large part of the migration has always been cyclical. While recent migration has included significant numbers of professional, most Puerto Rican migrants have been poor and unskilled, and have experienced major cultural shock upon arrival on the mainland. The island from which they come is characterized by a community-centered life, by reliance on extended families and support networks of relatives and friends, by a system which provides respect and care for the elderly, by vast amounts of sunlight and profusions of flowers, even in the barrios of the poor. The mainland reality most face in urban centers of the northeast and midwest could hardly be more different.

Most Puerto Ricans do not come to the mainland with intent to stay. They want to make some money and go home, or they want to spend their working years earning better wages and then plan to retire to Puerto Rico. Some do, but many remain. They, and most particularly their stateside-born children, become "Americanized". Their culture is not quite the same as that of the Island. They like to visit, but many, particularly the young, are not comfortable living there, and the Island residents are not always comfortable with them. Sometimes "Neyoricans", as the returnees are called, suffer discrimination on the island. Young people find themselves rejected by two worlds; too "American" to be fully accepted on the Island. and too "Puerto Rican" to be fully accepted on the mainland. Themselves the product of a racially mixed society, many Puerto Ricans confront white prejudice in the States and find themselves unaccepted by or competing with members of the Black communities. Sometimes they suffer discrimination at the hands of other Hispanics, a discrimination rooted in class, race, and an old scale of privilege and status that Spain conferred upon its colonies. Yet, despite this multi-faceted prejudice, the prospect of jobs and income continues to pull Puerto Ricans from the island to the mainland.

In the '50s and '60s most Puerto Rican migrants found the jobs they were seeking and became the backbone of specific industries such as the needle trades. They clustered in relatively stable low-income neighborhoods. But in the ' 70s Puerto Ricans in New York were dealt severe economic blows. A recession took hold, the garment industry exited New York, skills training programs were reduced, heavy immigration flows of documented and undocumented Asians and other immigrant groups—including significant numbers of Dominicans—increased competition for a diminishing number of jobs. Puerto Rican women who had enjoyed the highest rate of female labor force participation in the United States, suddenly found themselves without employment. Young men could not make a living. Family formation suffered and the rate of Puerto Rican welfare dependency increased as did the number of female-headed Puerto Rican households.

In the '80s the flow of other Hispanic groups to New York accelerated. By 1990, New York's "first Hispanics" found themselves pushed out of their position of dominance; "other" Hispanics represented a little over half of the

New York Hispanic population, and some of the others were moving up the economic ladder faster than Puerto Ricans, *largely because they had higher levels of education.*

Cubans

Most of the 1,055,000 million persons of Cuban background living in the United States are relatively new arrivals. They represent 5 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population. Compared with other Hispanic groups, the Cuban population is older—the median age is 39.3—and they have higher levels of educational attainment. This translates into higher income levels—the median family income is $ 26, 858 —and higher levels of business ownership.

Cuba enjoyed unique and prefered status under Spanish rule. The island was Spain's "Pearl of the Antilles", and it served as the administrative center of much of the New World Empire. The history of Cuban migration into the United States is unique as well because—from its inception in the late 19th Century— most Cubans entered the United States as refugees, not immigrants. The first wave, which settled in the Florida Keys, Tampa, and New York City, were refugees from the 1868-1895 Cuban Wars of Independence. In 1898, after the Spanish-American War, the United States annexed Cuba. Shortly thereafter when the United States granted Cuba independence, another flow of political refugees sought asylum. In 1900 there were 100,000 Cubans living in the United States, most of them having fled their homeland for political reasons.

In the 1940s and 50s Cubans fleeing the oppression of the Batista regime arrived, but the major migration (600,000) occurred in the early 1960s as a result of the Cuban revolution. It is estimated that a third of these political refugees—most of them from Havana—came from upper-and middle-class professional and business backgrounds. They relocated in Florida, New Jersey, New York, Illinois and California, assisted by a federal relocation program. They rapidly transferred their skills and built an economic infrastructure that allowed them to maintain their culture and to deal as peers with the majority community. At the same time they were able to provide employment opportunities for many of the Cuban workers who had

migrated with them. Their notable economic success contributed to the transformation of Miami which became a commercial and financial center for Latin America.

In the spring of 1980, the Cuban government announced that Cuban citizens wishing to leave the country could seek asylum at the Peruvian Embassy in Havana; over 10,000 did so, until access ended, and then the government opened the port of Mariel for emigrants who wanted to go to the United States. U.S. Cubans began a Mariel/Key West boat lift of 200 boats of all kinds, and between June and September 1980, another 125,000 Cubans entered the United States. Fifty percent of the Mariel refugees had family members here. The others were predominantly young males—a small percentage of whom had been in prison and they caused well publicized problems that alienated both the Anglo and the Cuban communities. Moreover, the new refugees had been raised under socialism. They had heavy adjustment needs and there were few programs to address them. Those who did not have family connections were adrift; it took a decade for them to overcome their initial problems.

Most of the Cubans who fled Castro expected that they would return to Cuba. They did not mentally unpack or seek U.S. citizenship in large numbers until the end of the Carter administration. However, the children of these refugees, most of whom are now young adults, do not dream of returning to reside in a place they never knew. Although they live a culture that is deeply Cuban, and tend to be fully bilingual, they are rooted here. These young Cuban adults enjoy higher-than-average educational levels. By virtue of its age, the older generation will decrease in size dramatically over the next decade, and the U.S. born generation will be challenged to reach the same levels of success as did their parents and grandparents.

Central and South Americans

The 1990 Census reveals that Central and South Americans represent 13.7 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population.

Dominican Republic	520,151
Central Americans	1,323,830
South Americans	1,035,602

Until 1980 Central and South Americans and everybody else who was not Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban, were lumped together in a catchall category titled "Other." In 1980 it was discovered that "Other" ranked second among the major Hispanic groups, and Census created two categories—"Central and South Americans" and "Others".

Central and South Americans can be divided into at least three groups:

Highly Skilled Latin-American Immigrants.

These young, skilled workers originate usually from South American or Costa Rica and other Central American countries. College-educated and often trained in specialty areas (engineering, law, architecture, etc.), these immigrants find their country's local economy unable to absorb them into the job structure. They come to the United States seeking opportunity.

Refugee Professional Class

Well trained, like their counterparts above, these individuals, once employed in universities or government, are impelled to leave their native countries due to a change in political leadership.

Central and South American Economic Refugees

These individuals, often from small towns in rural El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, as well as South American countries, come to the United States seeking work and or opportunity to better their lives. They are caught in the cross-fire—often literally— of rival political factions in their countries. Their educational levels are lower, and they are generally poorer. Should they find steady work, it probably will be in the service and operative occupations. When they can not find work, their lives are a constant struggle for survival. Their lot is further complicated when they are undocumented.

The Dominican population is concentrated in New York and New Jersey and it includes individuals from all the categories described above. The Columbian population is centered on the East Coast, from New York to Florida. Central American economic refugees tend to cluster in the southwestern centers, Houston and Los Angeles for example, but they are found in the East as well. New York's Latino population has become remarkably diverse over the last decade. In the same time period, the Washington DC area has experienced incredible growth of Latinos from all parts of Central and South America.

Other Hispanics

Other Hispanics fall into four general categories. They account for 6.9 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population.

Hispanos in the Southwest
Mixed Hispanics
Part Hispanics
The Spanish

Hispanos in the Southwest

Hispanos are long-term residents (five or more generations) of the Southwest, especially New Mexico, whose origins are the Spanish settlers. Over time Hispanos have maintained a unique identity that distinguishes

them from other Mexican-origin people in the Southwest. They speak a distinct Spanish and the majority are bilingual. Those who do not migrate out, continue to lead rural lives, and they have had the advantage of being the majority population in small towns where they have wielded political control.

Mixed Hispanics

Mixed Hispanics are the offspring of marriages between members of different Hispanic groups. Most live in major metropolitan centers where there is greater opportunity for contact among groups.

Part-Hispanics

"Part-Hispanics" are the children of out-marriage—a Hispanic and a non-Hispanic. As a rule, the parents of the Hispanic who out-marries have lived in the United States for a long time or are well-educated immigrants from Central or South America. Part-Hispanics are found throughout the United States. They generally have few language or acculturation problems.

The Spanish

These are individuals or descendants of individuals who immigrated to the United States directly from Spain without stopping to colonize or settle in Latin America. The flow has been small but steady since the middle of the 19th century, and it has represented a mixture of craftsmen, small businessmen and professionals. As a group they are older.

In Sum—

As our wide-angle views of "Hispanidad" illustrate, Latino groups differ in some important characteristics. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans are overwhelmingly young. Cubans are older. There are considerable differences in social class origin, race, and education status, and Hispanics span the immigrant, bi-cultural, assimilated spectrum. Their migration histories are

not the same, they reside in different parts of the country, and considerable diversity exists within as well as among the national groupings.

Nonetheless, what does characterize all the major groups with the exception of the Cubans, albeit in varying intensities, are high levels of poverty and low levels of educational achievement.

Poverty

One quarter of all Hispanic families are poor by federal guidelines; and therefore, many Hispanic children are likely to live below the poverty line. In 1990, Census data revealed that 38 percent of Hispanic children, compared to 44 percent of African-American children and 15 percent of white children, lived in families with incomes below the official poverty line. However, when one looks at median income of Hispanic men ($14,141) and Hispanic women ($10,099) it becomes clear that many more familes—even when and if both partners work—are barely making it. Hispanics are heavily represented among the working poor. In 1990 Hispanic married-couple income was only 69 percent of White married-couple income, despite the fact that Hispanic men have higher labor force participation rates than non-Hispanic men, and the labor force participation rate of Hispanic women is increasing. The 1990 Census reported that a little over half of all Hispanic women were in the labor force.

Educational Achievement

Most middle-class Hispanic children fare well to reasonably well in U.S. schools, largely because their parents—immigrant, refugee or native-born—know how to negotiate the education system, or know how to find out how to negotiate the system. Alarming numbers of lower-class Hispanic children—immigrant, refugee or native-born—do not fare well in U.S. schools. As was described in the opening of this chapter, Hispanics experience some of the highest rates of school failure, both in terms of those who fail to graduate from high school and those who graduate but with limited skills. They drop out almost three times more often than white students, and one and a half times more often than blacks. Almost half the Hispanics who

remain in school can be considered at risk of dropping out because of their below-average grades. A majority of Hispanics, then, are the kinds of students who in the past would simply have fallen by the wayside on the road to high school graduation, and even among the high school graduates, Hispanics are less likely to attend college than are either white or black graduates.

For most children, their attitude toward school, as well as their sense of themselves as intellectual beings, is established by a good start. Too many Hispanic poor children experience shaky starts, and a considerable part of the problem can be attributed to *the gulf between the schools' expectations of the parents' roles, and the parents' understanding of their responsibilities vis a vis the formal schooling of their children.*

THE NATURE OF THE GULF

Most low-income Hispanic parents want their children to succeed in school. But the vast majority of low-income, newly-arrived Hispanic parents, and many low-income Hispanics born in the United States as well, do not know that the expectations of schools in the U.S. are different from the expectations of schools in their countries of origin or in their parents' countries of origin. As a consequence, many poor Hispanic youngsters, like many other low-income children, come into the classroom unprepared to tackle school work that their middle-class peers find easy because their parents have not known how to provide them with the social, linguistic and cognitive skills U. S. teachers expect. (Fillmore 1988: Nicolau and Ramos 1990)

What Are the Differences in Expectations?

In Latin-American countries the role of parents and the role of school in relation to education are sharply delineated and divided; Parents have a serious duty to instill respect and proper behavior in their children. That is a parent's job. It is the school's job to instill knowledge. Teaching is not the parents' business and most low-income parents are unaware of specific practices—such as talking and reading to children, and encouraging their curiosity—that lay the academic skills foundation. Many Hispanic children

enter school not knowing their ABC's or numbers, not familiar with crayon s or pencils, not telling time, and not exposed to books and the concept of reading.

Furthermore, less than a quarter of Hispanic youngsters enter kindergarten with any preschool or daycare experience. Some Hispanic parents are reluctant to place preschoolers in institutional care: small children are vulnerable and the tradition is to keep them within the family. Still other poor parents who might consider preschool or daycare, find that it is unavailable or unaffordable. A considerable number of Hispanic youngsters enter school never having been out of their immediate neighborhoods.

Additionally many low-income Hispanic parents are uninformed about the value of free out-of-school activities—such as trips to parks, zoos, museums and libraries—that may provide a solid base for understanding the larger world and may reinforce what youngsters learn in class every day. Deeply concerned for the safety of their children, some Hispanic parents do not allow their children to go on field trips when they are enrolled in school.

While most Hispanic parents understand that children should do their homework, few have been exposed to the idea that school-age children should, as Dr. Reginald Clark proposes, spend up to 20 hours a week engaged in other "constructive" home learning activities, such as reading for fun, writing, pursuing hobbies, talking with adult family members, or playing games in the family, watching educational television.

Yet Hispanic parents take parenting very seriously. They work hard to teach their children essential social skills such as cooperation and loyalty, and they deliver them to the school neat, well disciplined and respectful. These are all positive values, greatly appreciated by teachers. However, *respectful* in Hispanic culture often is expressed by not looking adults in the eye, not speaking to adults unless spoken to first, not volunteering answers, and not asking questions. Teachers unfamiliar with the culture can interpret this behavior as rudeness or withdrawal, or just plain excessive shyness.

In addition, frequent, casual conversation between adults and children, and reading to children is not the norm in many Hispanic poor households. Moreover, many poor Hispanic parents have not had educational opportunity; they often do not themselves have wide vocabularies in Spanish or English. As a consequence, language delay is one of the most serious obstacles—and often the most misunderstood obstacle—that many low-income Hispanic children must overcome when they enter school. Many teachers assume that language delay is directly related to families speaking Spanish in the home. They fail to notice that it can manifest itself in English-speaking, Spanish-speaking and bilingual children; they are not aware that many Hispanic children are conditioned to be quiet around adults, and therefore lack the interaction that develops linguistic skills.

The monolingual Spanish-speaking children, however, face two hurdles when they enter the education system—they must accelerate their overall linguistic development *and* learn a new language in order to succeed in U.S. schools. The burden of that challenge is reflected in achievement histories. Children who enter school with a Spanish-language background tend to suffer higher levels of grade retention than do their Hispanic peers who enter school with a working knowledge of English.

When Hispanic children arrive in school minus preschool experience and lacking the basic skills that the schools expect, and when Hispanic parents tend to distance themselves from the school, teachers and administrators are perplexed and frustrated. A significant number leap to the conclusion that the parents don't care. In fact most Hispanics respect the school system deeply. But they tend to relate to it as most Americans relate to doctors or lawyers or priests—with awe. In their view, schools are in control and teachers are the experts who are not to be questioned. They do not feel that they have any role to play in the education process and they do not think that they belong in school unless their child has been causing trouble. The strong respect for schools that now works to restrict parents' teaching, can be harnessed to strengthen educational performance. The key lies in bridging the gulf. (Nicolau and Ramos 1990)

Why Haven't More Schools Recognized the Nature of the Cultural Gulf?

A goodly portion of school personnel are unfamiliar with the family traditions and life realities of the Hispanic parents whose children are rapidly filling their classrooms. And few teachers or administrators are offered guidance or training to help them interpret the behavior of Hispanic children and their families. Left on their own, puzzled by the behavior of parents and children alike, they tend to misread. They take the reserve, the non-confrontational manners, and the non-involvement of Hispanic parents to mean that the parents are passive and uninterested in their children's education. And the children's respectful demeanor and reluctance to ask questions or volunteer answers, can be mistaken for passive resistance. Language compounds the problem for them and the teachers are understandably frustrated. In the teachers' views, the children aren't learning as they should and the parents don't seem to be helping. Too often the schools and the children give up on each other, and the parents don't even know that it is happening until it is too late. (Fillmore 1988; Nicolau and Ramos 1990)

SCHOOL FAILURE
What Can Be Done About It?

Policy makers generally do not acknowledge either the extent or the severity of Hispanic under-achievement, nor have they developed policies to address it. The Council of Great City Schools, for example, sampled its member systems and found that where such policies do exist, they tend to be oriented towards and shaped by federal legislation, and are focused on a minority of Hispanic children. The report concludes that in focusing their attention (however meritorious) on the narrow issue of bilingual education for a limited number of limited English-proficient students, "the schools have let too many other Hispanic students slip through the cracks."

Not only can we say that many Hispanics have been adrift, floundering through school, their potential neglected, we can also foresee further difficulties for students of this type if reforms beyond the reforms for excellence are not implemented. Many Hispanics are indeed potentially achieving students, but very often the kind of school the student attends makes the difference in the course of a student's academic career. This is why we need to understand how traditional school organization can interact negatively with the class and cultural differences of Hispanics.

The Early Years/Lack of Quality Preschool

Current proposals to require all U.S. students to meet national standards in math, language and other subjects, if adopted and implemented will make early childhood education even more crucially important. Standards can be usefully and fairly applied only if the preparation—the education—that precedes the testing has been applied fairly and equally; setting standards implies a level playing field.

Over forty percent of Hispanic children are living in poverty or near poverty, and their parents are very young. Few have been exposed to child development training—many of them, in fact, are themselves still developing. The traditional parenting practices of many poor mothers and fathers—Hispanics included—do not encourage curiosity or experimentation with verbal skills; the good child is the quiet child. Parents tend to talk *at* children, not with them. Parents tend more to commands which children are expected to obey. Moreover, medical and dental care is scarce. Doctors are seen in emergencies and preventative medicine is shortchanged. As a consequence, developmental problems are not identified and caught early.

Poor Hispanic children are among those who can most benefit from quality childcare and preschool. Yet only a little over a quarter of the three and four year-olds are enrolled in preschool programs of any nature. Affordability and availability are factors that restict Hispanic participation. But so too does the culture that strongly holds that small children should be protected by trustworthy members of the extended family. Programs such as *Avance* in

San Antonio and Houston, that involve children and mothers together are one example of how the cultural gap can be bridged.

While quality preschool and childcare is not the panacea, it has proven to be an effective tool in reaching parents and children early, providing children with basics that can make their introduction to school a rewarding experience, and familiarizing parents with the skills and behaviors that schools expect. Key to the success of these parent components is sensitivity to the parents' cultures and needs. The best of the parent programs respect the children's cultures, respect the families' parenting styles, and suggest only that the parents augment what they are already doing. They are programs of addition, not subtraction. We need more of them, and we need school personnel who are specially trained to deliver them, because experience has shown that *the business as usual methods of parent involvement and orientation are not an effective way to reach Hispanic parents.*

Elementary School Years

Not all children have, or will have, the advantage of quality preschool. Most low-income Hispanic youngsters arrive in kindergarten without any kind of prechool. They are eager to learn but many lack the tools that U.S. schools expect them to bring along with their lunch boxes and blankets.

In school, a child is labelled, formally or informally, by the time he or she is 7. Children who enter school with limited English proficiency or underdeveloped verbal skills are often labelled "slow," no matter how bright they are. Less is expected of them than their peers, and subtle messages about being "dumb" are clearly transmitted. When the parents aren't around, and when schools do not understand the families' culture, too often teachers simply lower their standards to what they think the students are capable of achieving. Many children are written off by the fourth grade when school work shifts from simply learning the basics into more sophisticated application of these skills. As reading becomes more content-oriented, poor children, many of whom have not been exposed to the same experiences as their middle-class peers, are handicapped. At this point a child who has not

mastered the basic skills is left behind. And if the student has not been tracked earlier, he/she is tracked now.

In fourth grade many Hispanic youngsters first experience the frustration and loss of self-esteem that makes school a penitentiary. Instead of being associated with the pleasure of learning, the school environment becomes associated with failure.

Foreign-born children are particularly likely to be left back in the mid-elementary school years. Often, in fact, they are placed a grade behind when they enter school, or they repeat kindergarten or first grade because they have not been able to master content when they lacked knowledge of English. An obvious solution is the teaching of content in the native-language while the child masters English. Yet less than 25 percent of children with limited proficiency in English are in programs that teach English while they teach regular courses in the child's language.

Schools also fail immigrant children and many native-born Hispanic children as well, because there are not advisors, or counselors, or parent outreach workers who can communicate with them and their families. Foreign-born children and parents and poor families and children need attention and one-on-one help, but it usually isn't there and the children pay the price.

Summer compounds the problem for poor families. Summer learning loss is high for all at-risk children, more so for Hispanics. The children leave school in June, some with a shaky grasp of the year's lessons, and they return in September to begin the next grade knowing less than when they left. In addition, without the resources available to middle-class families, summers are long, hot and empty for many poor children. Younger children may spend a lot of time indoors in front of the TV. Some Hispanic families may keep older female children indoors as well to protect them. Older Hispanic youngsters—particularly boys—may hang out in dangerous environments where they find the wrong kinds of mentors and acquire the wrong kinds of skills. By the time they are ready to enter middle school, formal learning for many is viewed as an irrelevance. They want "out" with no clear picture of

what "out" means. Too many enter middle school marking time. (Valdivieso and Nicolau, Hispanic Policy Development Project 1988)

Middle School Years/High School Years

The teen years frequently are years of personal turmoil, particularly for Hispanic 9th and 10th graders. The physical and emotional changes that assail these young people as they pass from childhood into adolescence, and the fragmented school day, the increased freedoms and responsibilities encountered when they leave the structured confines of elementary school, are enough to engender problems for even the most self-disciplined and self-directed youngsters. Add the growing availability of drugs, alcohol and sex, the fact of pregnancy, a characteristic obsession with group conformity, an increasing awareness of poverty and discrimination, and the tribal instincts which lead to gang formation, and it becomes clear that here indeed is a time of testing and trouble for schools, Hispanic communities and families, and their children.

The mentors and counselors Hispanic students lack in elementary school are absent in middle and high school as well. At many inner city schools, a single guidance counselor may serve as many as 700 children. Few of these youngsters see Hispanic role models—teachers, principals, community leaders, office holders—to emulate. Worst of all, perhaps, is that most of these young people have no exposure to "what might be," little or no knowledge of the multitude of occupations and professions that might engage them or detailed steps that they must take to succeed. Most Hispanics are sent pro forma down the General Track that neither prepares them for college, nor provides them with saleable vocational skills.

Perhaps the factor that most affects the heavy exodus of Hispanics at the beginning of their 10th grade when 40 percent drop out, is that large numbers of Hispanics are doing poorly and are already one or more years overage for grade. There is little incentive for bearded 10th graders to remain in a situation that humiliates them on a daily basis, and few school systems have

taken the initiative to move overage students—boys and girls—into learning environments that can upgrade their skills and instill self-esteem. Traditional in-school remediation strategies will not address the educational needs of these students.

What Do Hispanic Students Think?

Those who are most directly affected by school reform are the students. They, however, are seldom asked what they think. The High School and Beyond survey, a longitudinal study sponsored by the federal government did question students about their schools and teachers. Their responses indicate that many U.S. Hispanics have attended less than desirable schools.

About half the Hispanics said that students in their schools often cut classes or did not attend class. More than one in five Hispanics said students often refuse to obey instructions and get into fights with one another. Five percent said that students often attack or threaten to attack teachers.

Hispanics rated as positive the following characteristics about most of their teachers at the corresponding percentages: enjoy their work, 37 percent; are clear in their presentations, 30 percent; treat everyone with respect, 30 percent; are patient and understanding, 26 percent; make you work hard so you'll learn, 24 percent; and are witty and humorous, 16 percent.

Only about one tenth of the sample thought their teachers were interested in their students' lives outside of class--a sad commentary on the fragmented and anonymous nature of school life for both students and teachers.

Relating School Reform to the Needs of Hispanic Students

Should there be special policies for Hispanics? Probably not, but the strengths, and needs Hispanics bring to school should be understood and addressed by schools rather than ignored or used to justify lower expectations for what these students can accomplish. Ultimately, it is not special policies for Hispanics that are needed, but a working understanding of how the background factors that Hispanics bring to school can be matched by school

policies that are suitable for all kinds of students—Accelerated Schooling and Cooperative Learning, for example.

No particular strategy or program is "the answer" to Educational Reform, There are no pink pills or magic bullets, although some advocates continue to go at school reform as if they were seeking the Salk Vaccine. There are, instead, some guiding principles that have to be applied with common sense and must be adapted to local realities.

The ten principles are these:

(1) creating a comprehensive sense of responsibility for the well-being of the school;
(2) demonstrating care and concern for every member of the school community;
(3) expecting academic excellence;
(4) grouping heterogeneously (and eliminating tracking);
(5) requiring involved, active learning;
(6) strengthening the counseling function;
(7) involving and educating parents;
(8) connecting school and work;
(9) immersing students in family and life planning; and
(10) providing opportunities for advancement upon high school graduation.

Hispanic students are learning and achieving well in certain kinds of schools, not because these schools have special policies for Hispanics, but because the way they are organized helps to resolve some of the obstacles to Hispanic academic achievement.

Responsibility for the Well-Being of the School

All students need to share in responsibility for the social and material well-being of the school. This can begin in small ways in early elementary years and increase in scope at each grade level. Adolescents, in fact, should bear considerable responsibility for self-government, including the setting and

monitoring of standards for student behavior and deportment. In the absence of a formal framework of student government with positive incentives for student leaders and groups, an informal system usually evolves. Experience illustrates that informal systems spawn competing leadership and groups, including gangs, that can wreak havoc in and around a school. Student responsibilities must be meaningful and must include solving real problems and developing real opportunities to improve school life. Many private schools have long traditions of student involvement and responsibility.

A "Culture of Concern"

Shared responsibility for the social well-being of a school is rooted in a "culture of concern." Such a culture fosters bonds among students and between students and the school, and it promotes a strong sense of belonging. In this climate, students support each other in a variety of ways, including helping each other with school work. Many elementary schools have introduced the practice of having children tutor each other across grades. Experience is that the young tutors benefit academically as much as their "tutees"

A large student body can be a serious barrier to developing strong relationships among students and faculty alike. Big schools alienate parents as well. It's hard to be caring or to feel cared about if you sense that school is a big baseball stadium or railroad station. Many cities have inherited giant schools that were designed to produce economies of scale. In fact they have produced little more than alienation on the part of school personnel, parents, and students. However, as demonstrated in Harlem, New York, these large schools can be organized successfully into several mini-schools or "houses" under the same roof. A mini-school allows all parties to relate to a identifiable entity. It puts a face on "school;" it allows teachers to know a small group of students better; and it encourages more interaction between students. Smaller schools and classes correlate better with lower dropout rates than do other general school characteristics. Within these mini-organizations, all students can "belong," parents can identify with a

manageable institution, and students and parents can carry out a wide range of academic and non-academic roles.

There are other ways that schools can be "divided" to promote achievement and "belonging." At a Catholic high school in Newark, for example, the student body is divided into groups, each containing students with different abilities and interests; these groups compete with each other in a variety of ways, including attendance, community service, academics, and sports. Students remain with the same group and faculty advisor throughout their four years of high school. The program is based on competition and cooperation that inspire an enthusiasm and a sense of group honor among team members, as well as personal devotion and regard for each other. The program emphasizes the importance of excelling in areas outside academics because the self-esteem derived from these experiences often stimulates better school work, or at least compensates for low academic abilities.

A community-based program, "Twelve-Together," organizes peer-counseling groups of 12 high- and low-risk ninth graders in each of Detroit's 20 high schools. The students in each group pledge to help each other through all four years of high school. Each group is guided by two counselors, and group members use "positive peer pressure" to keep each other in school, reinforcing attendance, achievement, and ultimately graduation for all group members.

Expecting Academic Excellence

Teachers and school administrators can not successfully education Hispanics if they assume that poor Hispanics and other poor children won't do well because their parents do not seem to care about their school work, or because they come from stressful neighborhoods . "That's still no excuse for not teaching them!" Frank Macchiarola, a former chancellor of New York City schools, would roar when he heard this attitude expressed by his administrators and teachers. According to Nat Hentoff in a recent Village Voice column, Macchiarola would then add, "We have to regard these children as orphans. And so we are responsible for them!" The first statement is to be applauded; the second deplored. Most of these children are

not orphans. Most have caring families, and those families—along with the schools—are part of the education equation. In any event, it is not productive to confuse caring for fellow human beings with either handouts or lowered expectations. *Challenging a student to excel is caring for that student.* Therefore, once a school has established an orderly climate and the beginning of a culture of concern for all its students, the faculty can begin to raise academic standards and expect greater effort on the part of the students.

All students should achieve mastery of a core curriculum with academic content requirements in English, math, science, and social studies. The learning tasks should be defined and structured to make clear what the students are to accomplish.

In middle and high school, the core curriculum should contain a vocational content requirement. Colorado, for example, has initiated an Employability Skills Project aimed at developing basic entry-level skills in *every* high school graduate.

Extra English language instruction is especially needed by students whose parents are poorly educated, and doubly needed by students who come from Spanish-speaking homes. Even after students learn enough English to be in regular classes, extra support is required for full mastery of English. Moreover, students who speak Spanish should be encouraged to read and write it well. It is a skill, and a marketable one, that they should not lose.

Absolute standards of excellence are not necessary, but all students should be encouraged to <u>strive</u> for academic excellence. Students who require more time and help to master any of the core curriculum subjects, should be provided with peer and volunteer tutoring, after-school sessions, and intensive summer programs, and taking more time to accomplish the tasks must not be seen as punishment, but as an opportunity.

<u>Heterogeneous Groupings</u>

By the time Hispanic children arrive in high school, less than a third are placed in academic or college preparatory programs; the remaining two-thirds

to three-quarters are in general and vocational programs, with emphasis on the former. The problem is that general and vocational tracks do not prepare students for much of anything.

General education was not designed as a curriculum that related to any broad occupational pattern, and the original goals for general education remain as ambiguous as ever. Most vocational education graduates—with the exception of those from secretarial and clerical programs—have little if any advantage in the labor market compared with general or academic track graduates. Less than one-third of vocational graduates ever work in the occupation for which they were trained.

In most public high schools, students who are bound for college immediately after graduation are considered "winners" and all other students are "losers" in one way or another. As a consequence, an environment is created in which teaching and counseling the college-bound has high status, while teaching students in the non-academic tracks confers low status in the pecking order of teachers' ranks. The students feel it. They sense that the teachers don't respect them or expect much from them in either intellectual or moral terms? Some behave accordingly.

Schools without differentiated ability tracks allow students with varying academic abilities to interact with and accept one another. The very smart students gain acceptance, and provide academic leadership for the other students. But the other students are allowed to excel in different ways, and their skills are respected. Friendships are made, and many opportunities to gain and confirm self-worth within the school context are available. Feelings of group solidarity and concern are strong in these schools. Unfortunately, there aren't many examples. Education gurus have been criticizing tracking for years. Schools know it. They just can't visualize how they could organize themselves and serve diverse needs without it. And they are reluctant to look at the schools that have and learn from that experience.

Involved, Active Learning

Overly bureaucratic school systems, structured from the top down, "freeze" the problem-solving attitudes and capacities of both teachers and students. These schools reinforce the passivity of lower class children and youth as learners. Working class children, unlike most middle-class children, do not always feel that they are entitled to learn all they can. Often they have to be invited to learn; their imaginations must be stirred, and their curiosities unleashed.

Some schools are organized to reinforce a factory worker/assembly line mentality, a sense of static harmony. Such an approach may have made sense in the past when schools thought that it was their job to prepare an "industrial army" for work on the manufacturing assembly lines. But today even modestly paid service jobs require a different set of skills involving flexibility, human relations skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills.

The bulk of Hispanic poor parents are workers in the leftover blue collar and low-skill service occupations that tend to reward obedience, not initiative. Most of their teachers, especially in large urban systems, have little or no say in selecting textbooks or materials, and little or no control over the conditions of their classrooms. How are Hispanic children to learn to be problem solvers who demonstrate flexibility and initiative when they are surrounded by adults who are discouraged from displaying these skills and attitudes? The parents' employment patterns can not be altered easily, but schools can change the way they deliver learning.

Schools should adopt instructional styles that allow students to be active learners through participation, deliberation, and reflection. Principals, teachers, and school communities need much more autonomy in setting specific goals and developing annual plans and budgets for their schools that meet legal requirements but relate education to the reality of the students' lives. Teachers need more latitude in how they are to accomplish their

mission. And schools and the communities they serve must work together to develop mutually agreed upon and understood missions and "hows."

Strong Counseling

The counselor (and the counseling function in general) often plays a crucial role—especially for Hispanics—in diminishing or inspiring educational and occupational ambitions. In today's society, it is hard enough for any adolescent to gain an understanding of our highly specialized, often abstract world of work. But surely the middle-class student has an advantage in this regard. They are raised in an environment that presents them with a range of options from the time they are very young.

While the recommended middle school/high school student-to-counselor ratio is 250 to 1, ratios of 700 to 1 and more are not uncommon. Some schools with large Hispanic student populations do not have counselors on staff who understand Hispanic cultures and can communicate in Spanish with their students' parents. This is is very central to the future of the children, because many Hispanic parents and students alike do not understand how a succession of curriculum placements in vocational or general education, for example, can limit opportunities for further education and careers. Counselors and teachers need to work with the student to expand the student's vision of possible options in the adult working world. Without seeing the potentials and opportunities of many careers, it is hard to develop realistic educational and occupational ambitions. This is important for all Hispanic students, but most particularly for Hispanic girls. Some poor Hispanic families continue to steer daughters to early marriage, partly to insure that they have a men to protect and support them, and partly because the education of girls who will become mothers and housewives is not viewed as a necessity.

Involving and Educating Parents

The importance of parent involvement and some of the cultural obstacles to achieving it have been discussed earlier. Hispanic parents must be made to feel welcome in the schools, and the schools must take responsibility for

communicating with them, in Spanish if necessary. Hispanic parents, especially those with limited education and limited English proficiency, often report that they feel awkward in approaching a teacher, and often fear they will be misunderstood because of cultural characteristics unknown to school personnel. Parents with limited language skills in English, and often in Spanish, too, report difficulties in reading school announcements and notes from teachers.

Schools must adapt their approaches to the schedules and life-styles of their parents. When families cannot get to school, the school must reach out to them in their homes. Hiring part-time community liaison workers is an excellent way to reach out to parents, especially through home visits and community meetings. Professional staff should also be involved in reaching out; principals should consider serving on the boards of local community groups, or writing columns for neighborhood newspapers.

Activities that help build bridges and close the cultural "gulfs" are these: opportunities for volunteer work; the establishment of school "family rooms" to overcome the reluctance of parents to be in the school; the scheduling of special classes for parents in subjects as diverse as nutrition, English, preventive health care, money matters; drugs; AIDS, abuse, things to do in the summer, or the generation gap.

Perhaps the most important tip on working with Hispanic parents is this: *Hispanic culture is a very "personal" culture, and the only way to reach Hispanic parents is through personal contact and the development of one-on-one relationships.*

Connecting School and Work

The connection between attending school and working is an area that requires close examination in the context of high school reform because it figures so prominently in the Hispanic students' world. Many Hispanic students, especially senior males, lead double lives as workers and students because they need to support themselves or contribute to the support of their

families. Schools pay little attention to their students' employment needs and few have any idea where or how long their students work.

Typically, Hispanic males have been higher labor force participation rates than either white or black males, although Hispanic rates differ considerably among geographic regions. High School and Beyond data reveal that Hispanic senior males averaged more hours (22.2) of work per week than other males. Just over 50 percent worked 20 or more hours a week, and 17 percent held full time jobs.

If school and work were to be integrated by schools in some fashion, then student's school work and paid work could dovetail to the benefit of both. Dropout rates probably would be lowered. Schools should experiment with combined programs of work and study, especially for older students. Some promising efforts have been made. An Albuquerque high school, for example, offers evening classes that are part of the school's regular roster of classes. California offers a "continuing education" program for students over 16 who are working; these students earn credit toward their high school diplomas on a part-time basis.

Family Life Planning

Fully a third of Hispanic female dropouts left school because they had married or planned to marry, according to 1982 High School and Beyond data. A quarter of the females left school because they were pregnant, although we do not know how many of these same females are also counted in the married category. At the time of the 1984 follow-up, nearly half the female non-graduates were married and over a third had children.

Hispanic youth often assume adult responsibilities sooner than other groups. We have seen this with a good portion of the dropouts. But it also occurs to those who graduate, including those with good grades. Within two years of graduating from high school, about 22 percent of the Hispanic females and 11 percent of the males had married. Some Hispanic young adults, especially women, are caught early in a web of adult responsibilities that restricts further education or career advancement.

Schools need to immerse students in "life options education, " teaching young people to set goals, not only for the kinds of families they want to have, but also for their own future education and employment. Education and instruction of this nature needs to permeate the school environment.

Sexuality education—sometimes controversial in the Hispanic community for cultural and religious reasons—can be treated as a component of life options education, or more comprehensively as a separate program. In addition to providing anatomical information, these courses cover sexuality-related topics such as dating, peer pressure, establishing values, decision making about sexual behaviors, sexual abuse prevention, and the economic, health, and social consequences of adolescent pregnancy. As drugs and AIDS invade poor communities, it is Hispanic and other poor children who are most at risk. No longer can ignorance shield them.

School-based health clinics are an excellent way to give adolescents convenient access to nutrition education, physical examinations, screenings, and help with drug and alcohol abuse. Such clinics also provide family planning, and may dispense contraceptives. Although the latter services have engendered heated debate, they are provided within the framework of holistic health care. The most innovative of the school-based health clinics offer services to the families of the students as well. Some schools combine the health clinics with on-site day care facilities for the children of teenage parents so that the mothers can improve their knowledge of childcare and return to class and stay in school.

Opportunities for Advancement

At-risk youths from working-class and poverty backgrounds need active encouragement, through a variety of incentives and supports, to stay in school. It is, afterall, unreasonable to expect youngsters to work hard if there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and many do not see that the diploma will confer any advantage. In fact, for many it does not; low skilled graduates do not earn more money than drop outs when they both qualify for the same job as packing clerk at the super market.

Corporate America has begun to recognize that something has to be in place to make students want to graduate and aspire to post-secondary education, be it academic or vocational. A number of incentive programs are now in place, roughly based on the *I Have a Dream* model that offer students who graduate with decent grades, support for college or post secondary training. The Boston Compact, a coalition of businesses and other private sector interests, has an arrangement with the Boston schools to improve students' achievement and work preparation in exchange for increased opportunities in employment and higher education. And slowly and carefully, the nation is looking at apprenticeship opportunities as a dignified alternative for the non-college bound, an alternative that can offer a secure ladder to well-paid, skilled employment.

Some Thoughts About Language Learning:
Bilingual and Otherwise

No discussion of Hispanics and school reform can conclude without touching on language. Bilingual education continues to be embroiled in a controversy fueled by the battles carried on in its name by both foes and advocates. In fact, most Hispanic students have never been in a bilingual program or, in fact, any special language program. A study by Joan Baratz of Educational Testing Service indicates that "68 percent of fourth-grade, 65 percent of eighth-grade and 82 percent of 11th grade language minority students receive neither bilingual nor English-as-a-Second Language instruction." Most of the kids are sinking or swimming.

Tragically, the narrow focus on bilingual education and alternative language programs diverts attention from other problems facing Hispanics in school. These special language programs are burdened with the expectation that they will magically solve all Hispanic school problems if we can just decide what they ought to be.

The political struggles between the adversaries on the bilingual question represent more than differences in opinion about how Hispanics should be taught. Foes fear that the use of a child's native language to teach subject

matter while the child is learning English will produce a child who does not learn English at all. Their ultimate fear is that our society will fragment into separatist cultures. Advocates fear that losing this issue will mean a return and acceptance that "swim or sink" is okay.

Bilingual education is, in fact, the one issue that Hispanics universally have supported and for which they have organized despite differences in political party, ethnic subgroup, and socioeconomic class. A people's most consuming battles may not be about gaining something, but rather about preventing the loss of something dear to the hearts of the people. Hispanic students and their teachers, unfortunately, are caught in the middle of these struggles. If the ideologues and soapbox fanatics would back away from this issue, it is likely that local communities, with some state and federal assistance, could resolve in a reasonable way the issue of how to teach English to language minorities. Indeed, until the latest rekindling of the controversy inspired by an administration spokesperson who blamed the high Hispanic dropout rate on the bilingual programs, considerable evidence pointed to an increasing flexibility and a growing sophistication on the part of educators and local authorities in dealing with this issue.

Nobody disagrees with the premise that students in U.S. classrooms have to understand English to learn. But it is one thing to learn a language well enough to function, if only marginally, in a regular or "mainstream" classroom, and quite another to become truly proficient in that language. While some Hispanic students with a Spanish-language background learn enough English through special language programs to be placed in regular classrooms, many similar students—as indicated by the statistics cited above—join their English speaking peers in regular classrooms without the benefit of any prior special language programs or concurrent support in mastering English.

The overwhelming majority of all Hispanic students come from working-and-lower class homes. This home background compounds the problems of children who are expected to master the English language, even in homes where English normally is spoken. While recent studies of American education indicate a general need for more English language instruction for all

students, it is doubly needed by students from homes in which family members do not work in vocations requiring the constant manipulation of

language. These students—Hispanics and others—should receive extra help in order to achieve mastery of English and the communicative competence required in this post-industrial and information-oriented society.

At present the overall responses to the need to improve English-language competence are wrongheaded. Many school authorities simply accommodate themselves to the students' low levels of language competence. In other situations such students are required to repeat a grade or more in elementary school. But simply repeating a grade does not mean that the students will receive the extra attention they still need, and by the time Hispanics reach high school, some 25 percent are two or more years over age for their grade levels. (This is why some Hispanic dropouts can reach the age of 16 without having entered the tenth grade.) It has been estimated that about 40 percent of all Hispanics who drop out of school do so before reaching the spring semester of the tenth grade. Even among Hispanics who graduate from high school, some 10 percent or more usually are overage. These rates are considerably higher than those of the general population.

Because no longitudinal study of a nationally representative student sample, spanning the elementary through the high school years, has ever been conducted, we cannot say for certain that language difficulties in the earlier years produce dropouts in later years. However, we certainly can say that these earlier difficulties play a part, for we know from studies in the late 1970s that Hispanic 14- to-20- year olds with a non-English background who usually or sometimes spoke Spanish were about two times as likely to be two years or more overage for their age level than Hispanics with an English-only background (27 percent compared to 15 percent). Furthermore, Hispanics with a non-English background who usually or sometimes spoke Spanish were three times as likely to drop out as Hispanics with an English-only background (45 percent compared to 15 percent).

And on a more practical, anecdotal level, it is instructive to note that one of the biggest complaints of the business community is that they receive both high school and college graduates across the board for whom they are required to provide remedial English classes. Our public schools are failing to meet the English language needs of all our children, native-speakers and immigrants alike.

CONCLUSION

Hispanics at risk of school failure (like all such students) need more humane and cohesive school units that integrate a well-defined, academically rigorous curriculum with a sense of community, rooted in nurturance, self-discipline, and esteem. All students and faculty benefit in such learning environments, and most educators agree. The real question central to school reform is not the *what,* it is the *how.*

Inherent in the concept of reform is change, and change is threatening . It means that "the-way-we-always-did-it"won't continue to be the way we do it. Therefore, the single biggest obstacle to reform are the many individuals who do not want to see reform happen right now in their back yards because of *what it might mean to them*—even though they intellectually accept and support both the concept of reform and need for reform.

Vested interest is not necessarily evil. In fact, self-protection is one of the most basic of human responses. Those who see their security threatened, who expect that their jobs might be changed, and their skills declared inadequate or obsolete, are not mindless obstructionists. They are frightened. And so we must find ways to balance the concerns and needs of those whose careers are tied to the multi-layered educational bureaucracies with the requirements that demographic, economic, labor market and social changes are imposing upon this nation.

As we move into reform, we must identify and put in place the incentives that will make all the players want to participate. We must seriously consider who may be innocently damaged by change, and try to make them whole. And finally, we must look to the schools of education. We must require that

they send us a new generation of teachers whose training is based on the ten principles described above, and we must demand that they instill those teachers with a world view that understands, values, and respects cultural diversity.

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